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ABSTRACT

A study sought to identify elements of the household economy, family structure, and parenting practices that help explain the aversion many Hispanic-American parents feel toward organized preschools. Data were drawn from a 1991 national survey of families with young children conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) and interviews of four Hispanic-American mothers. The NCES survey indicated that among Hispanic-American families with a mother employed full-time, 32 percent utilized a formal child care organization, compared to 55 percent of black families and 43 percent of white families. An analysis of the survey results found that the use of formal child care by Hispanic-American families was positively related to maternal employment, family income, and maternal educational level. Intact two-parent families, families with more than one child, and families that provided a more literate environment for their children were more likely to use formal child care than single-parent families, single-child families, and families providing less literate environments, respectively. The views of four Hispanic-American mothers on formal child care addressed the cultural congruence between the mothers and the preschool organization and the mothers' concern with learning, socialization, and school readiness. Overall, results suggest that preschool policy initiatives must take into account the more complex cultural values and expectations of Latino families. (MDM)

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RICH CULTURE, POOR MARKETS: WHY DO LATINO PARENTS CHOOSE TO FOREGO PRESCHOOLING?

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These research findings will be discussed at the Education Writers Association meeting in Seattle, April 14-16, 1994. This paper will appear in *School Choice: The Cultural Logic of Families, The Political Rationality of Institutions*, edited by Bruce Fuller, Richard Elmore, and Gary Orfield (Teachers College Press, 1995). The *Child Care and Family Policy Project* is supported by the Spencer Foundation, American Educational Research Association, and National Science Foundation.

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Chapter 3

RICH CULTURE, POOR MARKETS: WHY DO LATINO PARENTS CHOOSE TO FOREGO PRESCHOOLING?

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A $5 billion mixed-market of educational organizations already serves over 4.5 million children nationwide: the highly variable panoply of preschools and formal child-care centers operating across the United States. What can we learn from this public-private market? Why do ethnic groups participate at widely varying rates? Do cultural values play a role in the choices made by Latino families? This chapter draws on a national survey and ethnographic data from Boston to address how culturally diverse families are responding to Government's efforts to further institutionalize early childhood.

Latino parents are not buying into the burgeoning preschool market to the same extent that Anglo and African-American families participate. The proportion of Latino families, with a mother working full-time, that enroll their young child in a formal preschool or child care center is almost 25% below the participation rate for black families. This chapter seeks to identify elements of the household-economy, family structure, and parenting practices that help to explain many Latinos' aversion to organized forms of preschooling.

Some may argue that Latino parents' lower expression of demand may simply reflect an unequal supply of preschool organizations within Hispanic communities. But one initial assessment of this claim, studying per capita supplies of preschools and centers among local counties, found that supply may not be less in counties with higher

proportions of Latino families (Fuller and Liang 1993). Supply levels, of course, co-occur with families' expressed demand; and local demand from Latino parents may be constrained by their limited economic purchasing power, as well as by weaker community organization, compared to African-American communities.

In contrast to these market-failure or political-economy explanations, we pursue another line of argument: many Latino families may retain distinct economic and cultural characteristics that result in a lower propensity to enter the formal preschool market. For example, if a greater share of Latina mothers stay at home with their young children and remain out of the workforce, nonparental forms of care would be observed less frequently. Similarly, where a cohesive cultural group benefits from strong kin networks and greater availability of adults, who are obliged to help-out with young children, the incursion of formal organizations into the child-rearing domain may be buffeted. This interpretation is linked to the historical debate over whether modern, bureaucratized services inevitably erode traditional cultural supports for raising children (Durkheim 1925; Rector 1988; Coleman 1990).

Organization of the chapter. First, we detail Latino rates of preschool participation relative to other ethnic groups. Second, we show how Latino families share features that distinguish them from other ethnic groups, primarily in the area of family structure. Third, we assess whether these differences are related to Latinos' propensity to use formal child care less. Fourth, we draw on our qualitative data from Boston to look more deeply into the reasoning of Latina mothers as they enter, or avoid, the formal preschool market

Implications for the parental choice debate. We focus on empirically assessing how the structure of Latino families may lead to different preschool choices. We are not trying to normatively argue that Latino families should necessarily stick with "traditional forms" of child care; nor are we suggesting that Government should act more aggressively in boosting the supply of formal preschools. Jerry West and his colleagues recently revealed that Latino parents, in general, differ from other ethnic groups in their lower propensity to use formal preschools (West et al. 1993, National Center for Educational tatistics). We are attempting to understand why this utilization rate is far below other impoverished groups, and in particular the role played by demographic and culture features of many Hispanic families. We conclude the chapter by highlighting how cross-cultural variation in families' responses to mixed-markets of public services presents a new challenge to Government. Should earnest political activists attempt to undercut indigenous cultural patterns and ways of raising children? Or can the public-private structure of preschooling be adjusted to build from distinct (and internally diverse) cultural commitments held by parents from particular ethnic communities?

National survey data. Our first set of evidence comes from a 1991 nationwide survey of families with young children, conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). This paper focuses on families with children, age 3-5 years, who were included in the first National Household Education Survey. We then excluded families with five year-olds who were attending kindergarten at the time of the survey. Our subsample included 5,095 children age 3 (2,240), age 4 (2,218) and age 5, not in kindergarten (637). Each parent interviewed was asked to identify their youngest child living in the household, designated in this paper as the "target child." Initial findings reported in this paper pertain to individual children. About 400 households contain two children, age 3-5, rather than just one.

Understanding the cultual logic with qualitative interview data. Survey data are very useful in looking at nationwide patterns and in identifying economic and demographic variables related to family choices. But thicker qualitative data are required to understand how Latino parents perceive and reason about preschool alternatives. In the second half of this paper, we summarize the views of four Latina mothers who are participating in our two-year study of how low-income working mothers define the child-rearing process and the preferred role to be played by preschool organizations. Details of this ethnographic study appear in Holloway et al. (1993).

ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN PRESCHOOL CHOICES

Recent national tabulations show that 59% of all Latino families with children, age 3-5 years, currently use any form of nonparental care, compared to 75% for African-American and 69% for Anglo families (West et al. 1993, Table 1). Among families using nonparental care, just 39% of Latino families choose a formal center or preschool, compared to 58% for black and 54% for white families, according to the U.S. Department of Education report (West et al., Table 5). These national figures, of course, can be influenced by the proportion of women within ethnic groups who stay at home and do not enter the workforce. Indeed, 49% of all Latino women who report not working; they are either unemployed or not participating in the labor force. This compares to 34% for black mothers and 41% for white mothers. Conversely, 37% of all Latino mothers reported working full-time, compared to 49% of black, and 34% of white, mothers. Remaining shares work part-time, less than 35 hours per week.

We must then look at rates of using nonparental care within specific levels of maternal employment. Figure 1 displays the proportion of families who reported utilizing

any form of nonparental care by ethnic group and for each of the three employment categories: not working, working part-time, and full-time (more than 35 hours per week). Among mothers working full-time, rates of using nonparental care are uniformly high. But for families with mothers working part-time, ethnic differences begin to emerge: 71% of Latino families use nonparental care, 82% for blacks, and 77% for whites. Among families where the mother stays at home, 42% of Latino moms still rely on nonparental care for part of each week, compared to 56% for black, and 53% for white families.

- Figure 1 Attached -

Do Latino Parents Utilize Preschools and Centers Less?

What proportion of families using nonparental care choose a formal center or preschool? Figure 2 provides these basic findings: for Latino families with a mother employed full-time, just 32% utilize a formal child-care organization, compared to 55% of all black families and 43% of all white families. This difference is less strong but still evident for families with a mother employed part-time: 48%, 57%, and 56% for Latino, black, and white families, respectively. In sum, even after controlling for employment status, we see that Latino families are less enthusiastic about nonparental forms of child care and seemingly more averse to formal preschools.

- Figure 2 -

We also can look at possible ethnic differences in the hours young children spend in formal centers or preschools (again, just among families using nonparental care). For families with fully-employed mothers, children average at least 35 hours per week, regardless of ethnic group (Figure 3). But children from African-American families, where the mother is employed part-time or not at all, spend several more hours in a preschool or formal center each week, compared to the other ethnic groups. When the mother is working part-time, black children average 28 weekly hours in their center, compared to just under 26 hours for Latino children and under 20 hours for white children. This pattern is similar for families where the mother is not in the formal workforce.

- Figure 3 -

Are ethnic differences apparent in the quality of preschool chosen? Table 1 displays one indicator of preschool or day-care quality: the average number of children attending the child's classroom. Latino parents tend to utilize preschools or centers that have higher group sizes, compared to Anglo parents. This difference is substantial for fully-employed mothers using a formal center: Latino children attend classes with an average group size of 16.5 children, versus just 13.7 for white children. A similar pattern is apparent for families with mothers who are not employed: an average group size of 15.6 for Latino children, versus 14.2 for white children.

- Table 1 -

EXPLAINING LATINO PARENTS' AVERSION TO THE PRESCHOOL MARKET

Three types of family characteristics may help to explain Latino families' lower rate of preschool utilization:

- Latino parents may simply not have the economic resources necessary to purchase formal preschooling. The argument is that Latino parents are forced, given impoverished conditions or less disposable income, to rely on traditional forms of child care, including one's spouse or kin member.

- Latinos may tend to have larger and/or more cohesive family structures, whereby spouses and kin members are available to care for young children. This argument suggests that families vary in the strength with which social support and family obligations operate (what sociologist James Coleman calls, social capital). This normative level of family support presumably influences the intensity of expressed demand for formalized preschool services.

- After accounting for these differences in the family's material affluence and

social structure, parental practices related to the child's early learning and socialization also may be related to the propensity to utilize formal preschools and centers.

We first ask: Do Latino families manifest these distinct structural features, vis-à-vis African-American and Anglo families, and do these factors influence child-care choices? Second, do these family characteristics generally shape choices of families, independent of ethnicity? Third, does Latino ethnic membership exert a residual influence on the "under-utilization" of preschools, suggesting a cultural preference which we simply could not measure with national survey data?

Distinguishing Features of Latino Families

Selected family characteristics and parental practices for all households are reported by ethnic group in Table 2.

Family economy. These economic and social attributes of the family were reported by parents during the telephone survey. The first two rows provide precise figures for the share of mothers who are employed full or part-time for each of the three ethnic groups, as summarized above. The share of Latina mothers who are formally employed full-time (37%) is comparable to the rate for Anglo mothers (34%) and below the proportion for African-American mothers (49%). Part-time employment is lowest for Latina mothers. We tested whether observed differences are statistically significant, as reported in column 4.

Average household income averages between $20,000-$25,000 annually for Latino families, corresponding to the mean ordinal-scale value of 5.1. For blacks, mean household income falls between $15,000-$20,000 (4.6 scaled mean); and for whites, average income is within the $25,000-$30,000 increment (6.7 on the ordinal scale). The proportions of Latino and black fathers who are currently employed are very similar (79% and 81%, respectively). Just 39% of all Latino parents reported owning their home, versus 72% for white households.

- Table 2 -

Family social structure. Table 2 includes data on demographic and structural features of the families surveyed. One distinguishing feature of Latino families is that they are predominantly two-parent households, with 75% reporting that the father lives

within the home, compared to 45% for black families and 86% for white households. Both Latino and African-American households are more likely to have a nonparent adult living in the household. The total number of individuals residing in the household is greatest for Latino families, 4.8 adults and children, versus 4.4 for Anglo households.

School attainment levels are lowest for Latina mothers, with only 30% receiving any form of postsecondary schooling. Fertility behavior of Latina and African-American mothers is similar in one regard: 36% and 39%, respectively, gave birth to at least one child prior to the mother's 20th birthday. For Anglo mothers, this share is just 17%. Latino and black families are concentrated in urban areas. Almost two-thirds of all Latino families live in the western states.

Parents' educational practices. Families also were queried about a variety of educational activities and supervisory practices with regard to their young child. Table 2 includes means for a subset of these measures. For example, 52% of all Anglo parents report that they read to their child at least once each day, compared to 29% of all Latino parents and 27% of black parents. Related indicators of the home's educational environment are distinctly different for Anglo households, compared to both Latino and African-American households: white children appear to have more books in the household, visit the library with a parent more frequently, watch TV for a shorter period of time each day, and Anglo families are more likely to receive a daily newspaper.

Which Family Characteristics Explain Preschool Choices?

Are these family characteristics related to the decision to use nonparental forms of child care? And once parents enter the market, do these features of the household help to explain which families opt for a formal center or preschool? To answer these questions, we first estimated the probability of using any form of nonparental care, regressing this dichotomous dependent variable on the family's ethnicity, economic and social characteristics. These results appear in the Appendix, Table 3. Then, for families using nonparental care, we estimated the probability that the family chose a formal or preschool (Appendix Table 4).

These statistical analyses aim to identify the independent causes of parental choices. Typically the choice of nonparental care and a formal preschool is viewed as a function of the family's economic resources and demographic characteristics. In addition, we assess whether (a) larger family units with additional nonparental adults and (b) parents exercising more educational practices with their young child help to further explain preschool choices. Figure 4 illustrates this basic causal model that we investigated.

- Figure 4 -

Explaining parents' choice to enter the nonparental child-care market. We first assess whether the global influence of family ethnicity is significantly related to the pursuit of a nonparental child-care arrangement. We then study whether ethnic effects are moderated by the addition of particular family variables. That is, where a simple ethnic effect is observed, we hope to find the concrete family characteristic that substitutes for ethnic membership. Where ethnic identification shows a "residual effect," after entering all possible household-economy and demographic characteristics, unmeasured cultural factors may be operating. We return to this issue when reporting our qualitative data from Boston.

Latino families do tend to use nonparental care less, although this negative effect is not statistically significant after taking into account the highly positive effect from African-American membership. Household-economy variables are strong and significant: families have a greater propensity to seek nonparental child care when the mother is employed and when family income is higher. The African-American effect remains significant after controlling for these basic economic factors. For the technical reader, all logistic-regression models appear in Appendix Table 3.

Certain family-structure variables also are related to the choice of using nonparental care. Not surprisingly, older children (4 and 5-year-olds) are more likely to be in nonparental care. Families with a resident father and with more than one child (sibling in household) are more likely to use nonparental care. Keep in mind that all families are included in this analysis; the bulk of the sample are middle-class Anglo families. Households with mothers who gave birth prior to their 20th birthday are significantly less likely to use nonparental forms of child care.

Finally, we entered parents' educational practices into this multi-factor model. Even after taking into account the variety of social class and family structure factors specified above, parents' educational practices also are related to the use of nonparental care. Families are more likely to choose nonparental forms of care when more children's books are available in the household, the child watches TV for a fewer number of hours, and the family receives a daily newspaper. In this full model we also replace the family income variable with mother's school attainment, two closely related predictors ($r = .36$). Confirming earlier studies, we find that families with more highly educated mothers use

nonparental care at a substantially higher rate.

Explaining the number of weekly hours in nonparental care. The same sequence of four models was constructed to estimate the number of hours the child spends in nonparental care each week (using ordinary least-squares regression, only for families using nonparental care). Basic results: Children in Latino and African-American families spend more hours in nonparental care, compared to Anglo families. These ethnic effects remain significant even after entering the mother-employment and family-income predictors. When family-structure predictors are entered, it appears that households with a resident father and more than one child (sibling) tend to use nonparental care for more hours each week. Again, this may be a Anglo middle-class dynamic, where relatively affluent families with two or more young children can better afford to use nonparental forms of child care. The addition of parenting practices fails to explain much of the remaining variation in hours enrolled.

Explaining parents' choice to use a preschool or formal center. Next we come to the important question of whether these same family factors help to explain the choice of using a center or preschool (among the over 70% of all families who report using some form of nonparental care during the week). Ethnic status is significantly related to this choice, with Latino households less likely to use a formal organization (Appendix Table 4). When we enter the household-economy predictors, we see that household income is positively related to the use of a formal preschool organization; yet maternal employment is negatively related. Mothers who are not employed, when they opt for nonparental care, tend to choose formal centers (as we saw in Figure 2 above). Interestingly, after accounting for variation in family income and maternal employment, Latino membership remains negatively related, but African-American ethnicity becomes positively related to the use of a formal center.

When we enter the family-structure predictors, several additional findings become apparent. First, families with older children do tend to utilize centers or preschools more frequently. Second, single-parent families use centers more frequently, compared to two-parent families (again, speaking just of this subset of families that use nonparental care). Third, households with nonparent adult members also use centers less. The Latino aversion to formal centers may operate through this mechanism, since Latino households more often have kin members residing in the household, relative to Anglo families.

Parenting practices, as a block of predictors, are more influential, relative to the family-structure variables (comparing the decrements to chi^2, bottom of Table 4). Families that have more children's books and more sharply limit the amount of TV viewing use centers and preschools with greater frequency.

Summary of survey findings. Beyond the obvious effect of maternal employment on the use of nonparental care, we find that family income and maternal education are positively related to the use of nonparental care and to choosing a formal preschool organization. This is consistent with earlier work and confirms our recent finding that the per capita supply of child-care centers is greatest in local areas with more highly educated parents (Fuller and Liang 1993). Relatedly, we see that intact two-parent families are more likely to use nonparental care. Yet among all families that use nonparental care, two-parent families are less likely to use formal centers and preschools, after accounting for the effects of all prior household factors.

Variation in family structure further explains these child-care choices: families with an older preschooler, and with more than one child, have a higher propensity to use nonparental care and more frequently use a formal organization. Teenage mothers are less likely to use nonparental care and less likely to enroll the child in a center or preschool, although this latter finding is not statistically significant.

Somewhat surprising is the additional effect of parenting practices on preschool choices, even after taking into account the effects of earlier social-class and family-structure predictors. Families that provide a more educational and literate environment for their young child, generally defined, more frequently opt for nonparental care, and a greater proportion of these families choose a formal preschool organization. Young children who watch more TV are less likely to be in nonparental care, and among those that are, these children are less likely to be attending a center or preschool.

HOW DO LATINA MOTHERS SEE FORMAL PRESCHOOLS?

These survey findings are helpful in studying nationwide patterns and explanatory models that can be generalized broadly. However, they do not tell us much about how Latino parents themselves view preschool organizations, or how they compare local institutions to less formal arrangements. To provide this more textured understanding of parents' views, we summarize below initial findings from our qualitative study of 14 low-income mothers in the Boston area. This study includes 4 Latina mothers with young children, under 5 years-old, who were interviewed repeatedly over a two-year period.

Caveats. These qualitative findings stem from our initial analysis of the ethnographic evidence. It takes considerable time to analyze our interview transcripts and to understand the emic constructs and perceptions that are guiding the actions of these 4 Latina mothers (see Holloway et al. 1993, for a detailed discussion of our method).

Second, we did not, a priori, prompt mothers to make a direct comparison between a formal child-care center vis-à-vis a less formal provider, although this issue arose in several interview sessions. Two of the Latina mothers relied on a formal center; two mainly used family day-care homes when they joined the study. Third, we are not introducing the qualitative evidence to confirm or disconfirm the patterns observed in our quantitative analysis. It would be foolish to make any generalizations based on just 4 Latina mothers. Our extended conversations with these women, however, have proven to be enormously helpful in understanding the categories they use in formulating their preferences for, or feelings about, different types of preschooling for their young child.

Two sets of criteria are salient in the minds of these 4 Latina mothers, influencing how they see and assess different child-care organizations: (a) cultural congruence between the mother and the preschool organization, and (b) the mother's concern with learning, socialization, and "getting ready for real school."

Cultural Congruence Between Mother and Child-Care Provider

Conflicts over language differences, between mother and day-care provider, represent a common example of cultural incongruity. Silvia (SL9) initially used a Colombian babysitter to care for her young daughter. Then, she later switched to a formal center. Silvia now complains that most center teachers and staff are "Americans." Initially, when the daughter came home from the center, Silvia could not understand her daughter's newly acquired English. Dolores (DM14) reports that just one classroom aide can speak Spanish, among staff that interact with her daughter. Dolores began sending children's books in Spanish, so that her daughter could read with the aide. Dolores feels like the Anglo school staff view Latino parents as "ignorant." Silvia believes that the few Latino staff in her center invite comments and involvement by Hispanic parents: "they [the Latino staff] give us a chance to participate." Silvia summarizes her similar situation:

> "Luckily,the majority of the children are Hispanic, and then they got a Hispanic teacher, because there's so many Hispanic children coming in, and so they have problems communicating with the children... slowly, [the daughter] adapted herself bit by bit."

Dolores, who migrated from El Salvador, reports how her daughter kept repeating new English words, introduced within the preschool, and asking what they meant in Spanish. Dolores does step back to express a belief that learning English is a step toward greater "independence." In contrast, Beatriz (BB11) strongly endorses the bilingual activities that are structured by her son's preschool teacher, an Hispanic woman, and chooses to keep her older son in a bilingual program. Beatriz is not opposed to an assimilationist viewpoint. But she expresses a desire for her sons to continue developing language skills in both Spanish and English.

Intertwined with this language gap, these Latina mothers frequently mention the importance of communication and shared commitment -- between the provider and the mother -- to the child's development. Santa (SM12) compares the two family day-care (FDC) providers that she has utilized in recent years. The most recent FDC provider, not a Latina, is simply unavailable for building the kind of close bond that Santa had developed with the first provider, a Latina woman. She argues that "parents are not exactly welcome there... it is a depressing (place) around there for parents." Our Latina mothers talk about a compromiso, where the parent shares a commitment with the provider to the child's socialization, which must be manifested through warm personal links.

Beatriz elaborates this harmony that operates between she and her current family day-care provider. Beatriz likes how her provider emphasizes the need to be respectful of adults and disciplined in one's behavior. This provider has become a friend to Beatriz, assisting with pick-ups and even helping out when Beatriz has car trouble. She also believes that family day-care offers a greater opportunity to develop this close relationship with the provider, since there are fewer kids and families involved.

Dolores talks of how the Latino classroom aides at her daughter's center were warmer and more caring, compared to the Anglo teacher at her daughter's new kindergarten. (cariñosa). She makes a sharp statement that the Anglo staff are cold and rough, "because they are Americans." Silvia complains how one Anglo teacher at her daughter's center lacks this gentleness and affective richness, citing the time when the teacher pulled her daughter's shirt to correct her behavior. The Latina mothers talk of how the basic building blocks of socialization are established within the home, often centering on respect for adult authority and sensitivity to others. Dolores speaks of how the preschool can assist in this socialization process by teaching "routines" and rules. The maturation process reflected in realizarse connotes learning how to be competent and personally effective within the situational rules.

The child's emerging feeling of efficacy is seen within a framework that emphasizes respect for other actors and clear understanding of the constitutive rules. Santa, for example, in talking about her child's developing "independence," emphasizes the need to learn "adaptability." When these particular Latina mothers feel that providers are not expressing this textured mix of warmth, openness, and clear situational rules, clear dissonance may often surface. The quality of the relationship between mother and day-care provider (or teacher) is a salient indicator of how Latina mothers believe staff members behave with their children. If the provider is not available to discuss family issues wholistically, then the teacher or aide is unlikely to be concerned with the child's broad socialization. Dolores, for example, is deeply dissatisfied with her daughter's new kindergarten teacher: the teacher is simply not concerned with her daughter's life beyond the boundaries of the classroom. Here professional rationalization and set procedures may

thoroughly erode a broader, more affective commitment expected by these Latina mothers.

Learning and Getting Ready for School

The second set of criteria that these Latina mothers frequently utilize pertains to their concern over whether their young children will be ready for their initial years in public school. It is difficult to precisely understand how this incursion of parents' expectations about formal schooling are integrated with their broader view of child socialization. Indeed, the conception of educación held by these mothers connotes a broader socialization agenda: one that emphasizes learning to get along with other children, to develop respect for adult authorities, and to learn the ropes of working within a formal school-like setting. Silvia summarizes the benefits of preschooling:

> "It's true that the child has to go to school and has to get used to a big group of students and know other people. In [the center] she has to share toys...she is courteous, she is taught everything."

Educación implies that one is learning to fit into a lateral social structure with other kids, and learning formal routines set by the organization to enable greater realización of the child's own potential development. What might be seen as learning how to "conform," in middle-class North American terms, is perceived as nurturing a more competent, more respectful young child. In the words of Beatriz:

> "My [older son] was raised alone, with me, that is, with no other children alone. And I think it changes when children are involved with more children... they manage faster, develop more. I don't think [younger son] is more intelligent than [older son] at his age, no. It's that he [younger son in preschool] is around more children and sees what other children are doing."

Similarly, Dolores emphasizes the number and closeness of the friends that her daughter has developed:

> "More than anything, she likes her friends. She has many friends and talks to me a lot about them. Her teachers. She loves them a lot."

Dolores also illustrates how parental goals linked to cognitive development blend with this broader conception of educación and socialization:

> "I prefer that she begin to think, you know...that she become a little more mature, [so] she knows when it's time to play and when it's time to work, because children also need that. And more so in our culture...I remember in kinder we learned a lot. I knew how to read, write. I would add and subtract."

Some mothers link these cognitive learning goals with broader parenting objectives. For example, Silvia talks of how, "you have to sacrifice yourself" to get ahead. She broke away from her own strict traditional upbringing in Puerto Rico; thus Silvia emphasizes the role of formal schooling in establishing "independence." But, again, this conception of independence is embedded in the emphasis placed on respect, authority, and learning basic rules of the school organization. Here again "independence" of the child is defined within Silvia's commitment to building a "trusting" and affectively rich relationship with both of her children.

CONCLUSIONS: THE CULTURAL LOGIC OF PRESCHOOL CHOICES

Amy Stuart Wells shows -- in this book's second chapter -- how the cultural logic of local families can powerfully drive parents' choices about schooling. The debate over family choice and empowerment remains preoccupied with how the financing or mechanics of school programs can be manipulated to widen alternatives. Instead, we emphasize that families are embedded in particular local cultures which offer familiarity, social memberships, and concrete support. The family's cultural scripts pertaining to child rearing are energized and reproduced over time through strong actors and processes, including normative gender roles and maternal employment patterns, the presence or absence of kin members to assist with child care, ethnic customs, and educational practices in which parents may engage with their young children. We are just beginning to learn how these cultural forces -- expressed through the daily lives of diverse families -- can buffer the earnest intentions of secular policy makers.

Family policy activists, inside and outside Government, have made great strides in recent decades in expanding the availability of preschool organizations. Yet we have shown how Latino families remain less committed to these formal child-care institutions. In some local areas, Latino parents may simply be less able to find affordable preschooling. But deeper than this supply constraint, lay family-level factors that explain this lower rate of utilization. Latino families retain the traditional strength of having kin members and neighbors close-by in the household who ofen are available to help care for their young children. Despite low household incomes, Latina mothers often remain at home, or on the fringes of the formal workforce, primarily raising their young children. The ongoing rationalization of early childhood -- now endorsed by most policy makers -- has not penetrated into the consciousness of Latino families, relative to Anglo middle-class and African-American families.

On the other hand, we should take care to avoid romanticizing the situation of Latino families: their lower rate of preschool participation unfortunately is related to Latina

mothers' low levels of formal education, a higher incidence of teenage women giving birth, and parental practices that do not emphasize early literacy. The policy dilemma, of course, is how to alter these practices that constrain choices while not inadvertantly eroding traditional social supports found among many Latino families.

Public policies often operate as rather dull instruments -- attempting to alter the behavior of local families or simply responding to changing roles and demands exogenously exercised by the evolving American family. Latino families are clearly not responding to the broad, often dull, policy initiatives seen within the preschool domain, in sharp contrast to the responses of black parents. And our qualitative evidence reveals that institutional factors play a role: simple repelling forces are apparent, such as the lack of Spanish-speaking staff in many preschool organizations. Whether formal preschool organizations can acquire the values and forms of child-rearing desired by many Latino parents is a more complex question. If policy makers remain unable to devise more culturally convergent forms of preschooling -- while continuing to stigmatize indigenous forms of child socialization -- the result for Latino families will be far from empowering.

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Figure 1: Proportion of Families Using Nonparental Care

By Ethnic Group and Employment Status

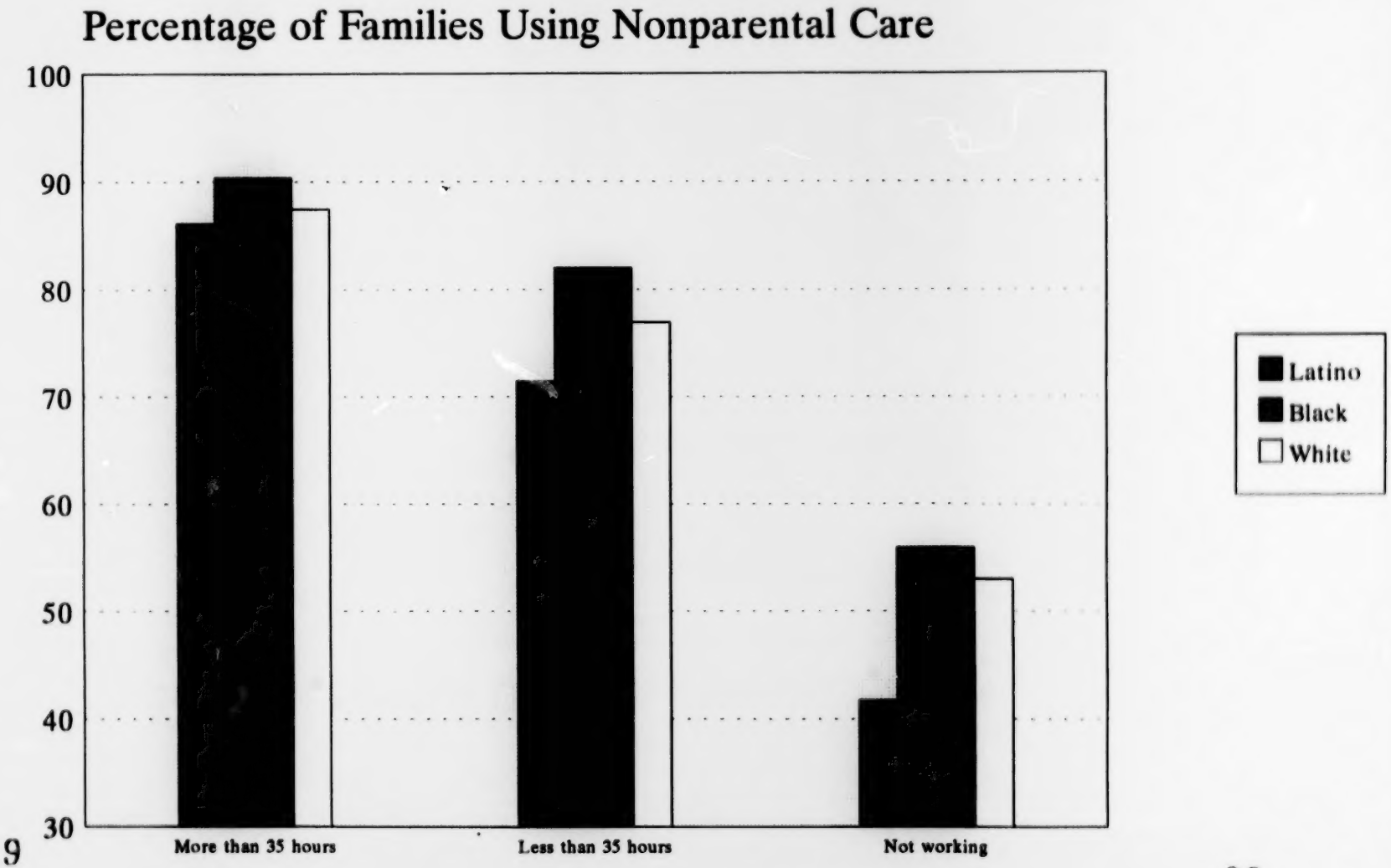

Figure 2: Proportion of Families Choosing A Preschool or Formal Center

For Families Using Nonparental Care

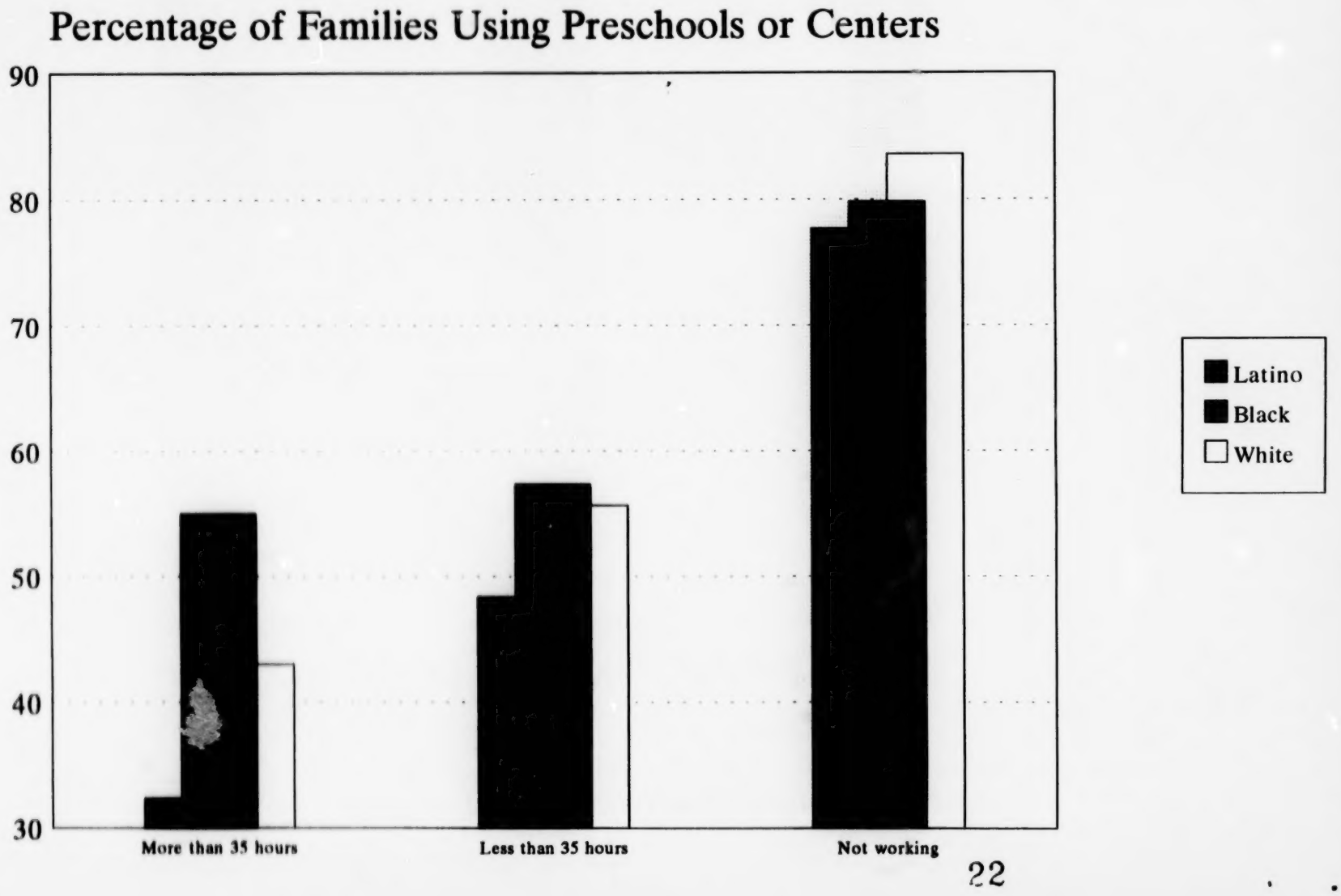

Figure 3: Weekly Hours in A Preschool or Formal Center

For Families Using Preschools or Centers

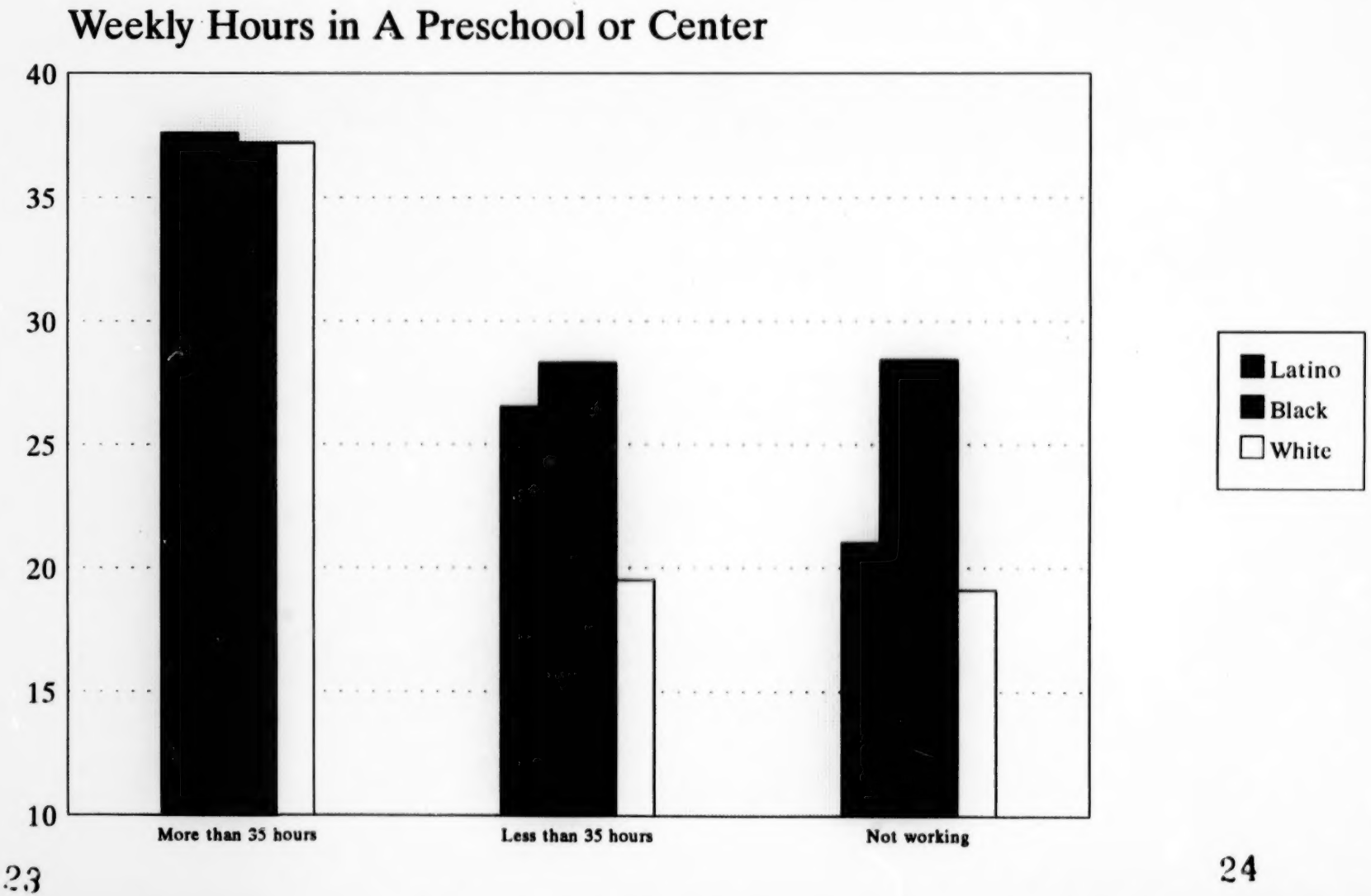

Figure 4:

Possible Household Determinants of Parents' Preschool Choices

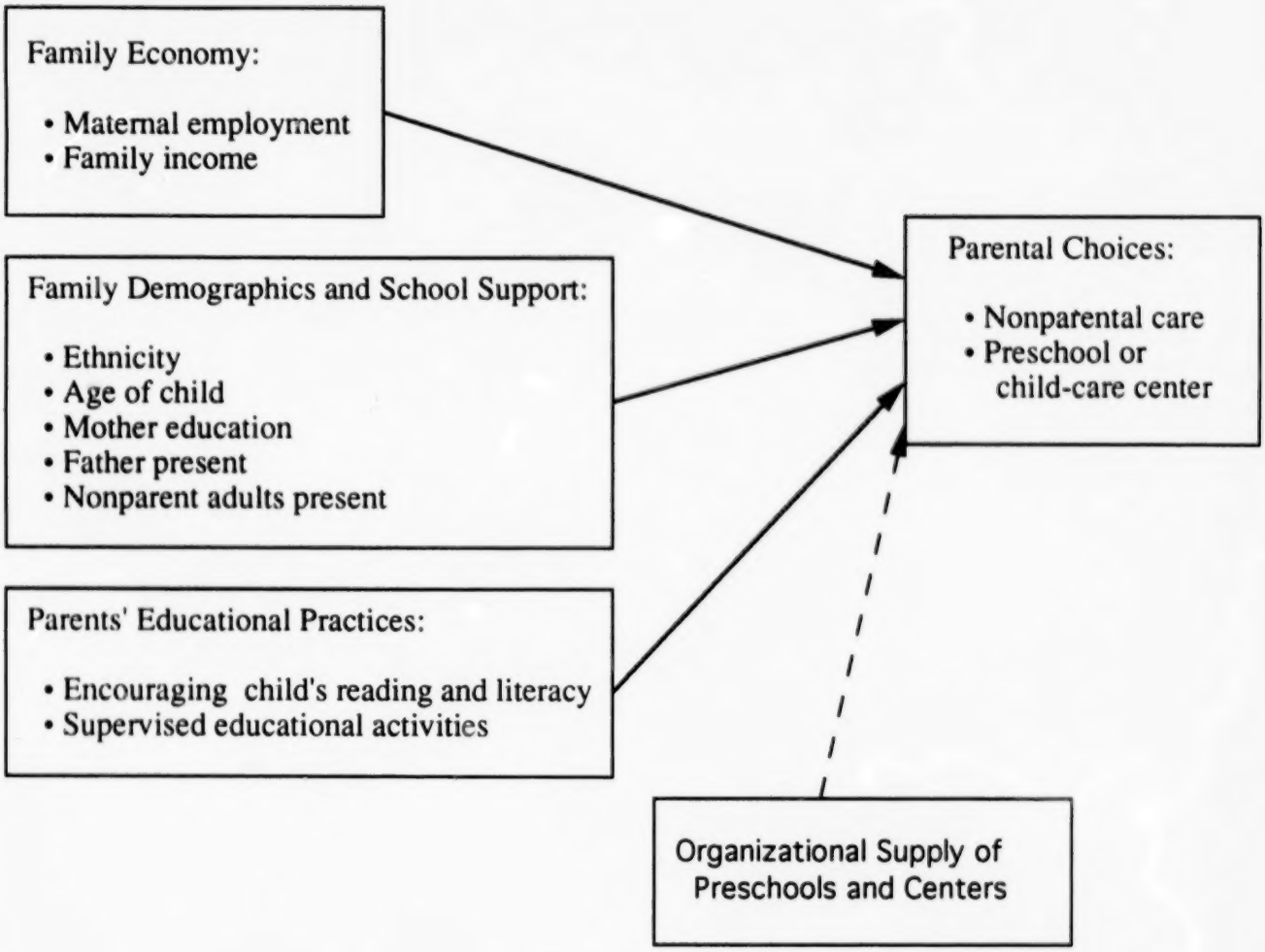

Table 1

Weekly Hours Spent in Nonparental Care, Hours in Preschool Organizations, and Preschool Group Size by Family Ethnic Group
[Including only families using nonparental care; means and *sd* reported]

	Weekly Hours in Nonparental Care	Weekly Hours in Preschool	Average Child Group Size
■ **Latino families** [$n = 336$]			
Mother working full-time	**34** (13.8)	**38** (13.9)	**17** (8.4)
Mother working part-time	**27** (12.9)	**27** (18.3)	**15** (10.5)
Mother not working	**16** (10.1)	**21** (10.5)	**16** (5.3)
■ **African-American families** [$n = 390$]			
Mother working full-time	**36** (11.5)	**38** (10.5)	**14** (6.1)
Mother working part-time	**25** (13.8)	**30** (14.4)	**17** (5.1)
Mother not working	**23** (12.4)	**30** (14.9)	**15** (5.5)
■ **Anglo families** [$n = 2,383$]			
Mother working full-time	**35** (13.2)	**38** (11.5)	**14** (6.0)
Mother working part-time	**19** (11.9)	**20** (11.8)	**12** (4.9)
Mother not working	**13** (10.9)	**19** (13.4)	**14** (7.0)

Table 2

Economic and Social Characteristics of Latino, African-American, and Anglo Families
[Including all sampled families; means, sd, and f or chi-square values reported]

	Latino Families [n=597]	African-Amer Families [n=575]	Anglo Families [n=3,605]	Stat. sig. Difference
■ **Economic Characteristics**				
Mother employed full-time[1] (% of families)	37	49	34	$\chi^2=87.8$*
Mother employed part-time (% of families)	14	17	26	
Fathers employed, if present (% of families)	79	81	91	$\chi^2=74.9$*
Household-income index[2]	5.1	4.6	6.7	f=270.9*
Families who own their home (%)	39	40	72	$\chi^2=423.3$*
■ **Social/Demographic Characteristics**				
Family structure				
Mean number of people living in the household	4.8	4.5	4.4	f=27.1*
Mean number of nonparent adults in household	.29	.41	.11	f=129.7*
Households with father present (%)	75	45	86	$\chi^2=528.0$*
Households where sibling is living with target child (%)	79	75	82	$\chi^2=21.5$*
Households where at least one parent has some postsecondary schooling (%)	39	49	68	$\chi^2=235.7$*
Mothers				
Mothers who gave birth prior to age 20 (% of households)	36	39	17	$\chi^2=218.0$*

Table 2 continued...

	Latino Families	African-Amer Families	Anglo Families	Stat. sig. Difference
Households where mother has some postsecondary schooling (%)	30	39	54	$\chi^2=149.0$*
Location of Residence				
Families located in urban areas (%)	90	88	76	$\chi^2=88.2$*
Families residing in western states (%)	65	20	26	$\chi^2=415.2$*
■ **Parenting Practices**				
Parents reporting that they read to their child at least once each day (% of families)	29	27	52	$\chi^2=211.5$*
Parents reporting that their child owns more than 10 books (% of families)	66	71	95	$\chi^2=632.0$*
Parents reporting that they receive a daily newspaper (%)	63	65	81	$\chi^2=133.1$*
Daily hours of TV viewing by child (mean number of hours)	3.2	3.1	2.8	$f=14.6$*
Parents reporting that they set limit on child's TV viewing (%)	53	54	52	$\chi^2=0.78$
Parents who visited the library with child during the past month (%)	24	26	40	$\chi^2=86.2$*
Parents who accompany their child to a movie during the past month (%)	39	50	36	$\chi^2=46.4$*

Notes

1. Significance of differences assessed with a 3-by-3 chi-square table (employment status by ethnicity). Chi-square tests were used for all categorical variables; simple ANOVA tests were done for continuous measures.

2. A 10-point ordinal index of family income increments. A coded value of '1' equals $5,000 or less; a value of '10' equalsover $75,000.

*$p < .0001$

APPENDIX - Table 3

Influence of the Family's Ethnicity, Economy, Social Structure, and Parental Practices on the Probability of Using Nonparental Child Care

[All families; logistic regression coefficients and se reported]

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Family Ethnicity				
Latino	-.14 (.11)	.08 (.12)	.13 (.13)	.13 (.15)
African-American	.32** (.10)	.61*** (.11)	.51*** (.12)	.46** (.14)
Household Economy				
Mother employed full-time		1.67*** (.08)	1.71*** (.09)	1.75*** (.09)
Mother employed part-time		.96*** (.08)	1.02*** (.09)	1.02*** (.09)
Annual household income		.17*** (.01)	.18*** (.02)	--
Family Social Structure				
Age of target child			.48*** (.05)	.50*** (.05)
Gender of child			.02 (.07)	.07 (.07)
Father living in household			.51*** (.10)	.31* (.11)
Nonparent adults in household			-.02 (.07)	.14 (.08)
Sibling lives in household			.44*** (.09)	.42*** (.11)

Models continued, next page...

Appendix Table 3 continued...

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Teenage mother			-.35***	-.27*
			(.09)	(.09)
Mother's school attainment			--	.70***
				(.08)
Parenting Practices				
Reads to child every day				.07
				(.09)
Child owns more than 10 books				.34*
				(.13)
Family receives daily newspaper				.35***
				(.08)
Average weekly TV viewing (hours)				-.11***
				(.02)
Equation				
Intercept	.85	-.90	-3.84	-3.55
-2 Log liklihood	6,142.8	5,413.0	5,115.4	4,467.6
DF	2	5	11	15
Decrement to χ^2		729.8***	297.6***	647.8***

χ^2 *p<.01 **p<.001 ***p<.0001

APPENDIX - Table 4

Influence of the Family's Ethnicity, Economy, Social Structure, and Parental Practices on the Probability of Using Preschool or Formal Child-Care Center

[Only families using nonparental care; logistic regression coefficients and se reported]

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Family Ethnicity				
Latino	-.37**	-.32*	-.27	-.41*
	(.13)	(.14)	(.15)	(.17)
African-American	.11	.36***	.63***	.62***
	(.10)	(.11)	(.12)	(.13)
Household Economy				
Mother employed full-time		-1.71***	-1.92***	-2.09***
		(.09)	(.10)	(.11)
Mother employed part-time		-1.21***	-1.43***	-1.59***
		(.10)	(.11)	(.12)
Annual household income		.06***	.04*	--
		(.02)	(.02)	
Family Social Structure				
Age of target child			.25***	.27***
			(.06)	(.06)
Gender of child			-.07	-.04
			(.07)	(.08)
Father living in household			-.41***	-.52***
			(.11)	(.11)
Nonparent adults in household			-.34***	-.26**
			(.08)	(.09)
Sibling lives in household			.17	.24*
			(.09)	(.10)

Models continued, next page...

Appendix Table 4 continued...

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Teenage mother			-.17 (.10)	-.06 (.11)
Mother's school attainment			--	.21* (.09)
Parenting Practices				
Reads to child every day				-.16 (.10)
Child owns more than 10 books				.36* (.16)
Family receives daily newspaper				-.04 (.08)
Average weekly TV viewing (hours)				-.23*** (.03)
Equation				
Intercept	.34	1.02	.84	1.21
-2 Log liklihood	4,893.0	4,484.1	4,238.8	3,714.7
DF	2	5	11	15
Decrement to χ^2	--	408.9***	245.3***	524.1***

χ^2 *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001